

DNA ANALYSIS SPECIALIST GROUP

Notes of the eleventh meeting, held at 12:30pm on 27 March 2012, at 5 St Philip's Place, Colmore Row, Birmingham

Present:

Karen Squibb-Williams	CPS (Chair) via teleconference
David Balding	Royal Statistical Society
June Guinness	Forensic Science Regulation Unit (Deputy Chair)
Susan Hales	Met Police (for Kathryn Dagnall)
Brian Irwin	FSNI
Ben Mallinder	Scottish Police Service Authority
Shirley Marshall	Forensic Science Society
Andrew McDonald	Orchid Cellmark
Dorothy Ramsbottom	Forensic Science Laboratory, Ireland
Adam Shariff	NPIA
Jim Thomson	LGC Forensics (for Kerry Way)
Kenny Chigbo	(Secretary)

Apologies

Kathryn Dagnall	Met Police
Simon Iveson	Forensic Science Regulation Unit
Tony Nash	Met Police
Denise Syndercombe-Court	International Society for Forensic Genetics
Des Van Hinsberg	Forensic DNA Services
Kerry Way	LGC Forensics

Item 1: Opening and welcome

1.1 June welcomed those present to the eleventh meeting of the DNA Analysis Specialist Group.

Item 2: Minutes from the last meeting

2.1 The minutes of the meeting on 22 September 2011 were agreed.

Item 3: Matters arising

3.1 Paragraph 5.2: The annex needs to be reviewed and published soon. It was not clear whether a consultation was required. June agreed to check with Simon Iveson if a consultation was necessary.

Action: June Guinness

3.2 Paragraph 10.2: The error rate calculation paper has been put on hold. Simon Iveson will be asked to circulate the previous paper from April 2010.

Action: Simon Iveson

3.3 Paragraph 11.2: The DNASG discussed whether it would be better if the Q&A with prosecutors was added as an annex to Peter Gill's paper. The plan is to put it on the CPS website. It was also suggested that there should be a feedback facility on the portal that the Q&A is published.

Action: Karen Squibb-Williams

3.4 The other actions from the last meeting were either cleared or are agenda items for this meeting.

Item 4: DNA "Hotline"/webpage

4.1 The DNASG discussed the possibility of setting up a web-based resource for DNA information. The options were for the Forensic Science Regulator or the CPS to host this on their websites. The second option would be limited in the sense that the CPS only covers England and Wales. Other options for hosting the webpage could be the Forensic Science Society and the International Society for Forensic Genetics. This will be proposed to the Forensic Science Strategy Board at their next meeting in May. The DNASG agreed with the proposal in principle and members with any thoughts on this proposal should email them to June. June and Karen agreed to explore the proposal further with the Regulator.

Action: Karen Squibb-Williams/June Guinness

Item 5: Work plan

5.1 The major task for the DNASG in the next few months is the development towards the use of the new multiplex kits. This will be the main focus. Meetings of the DNASG will be scheduled over the next 12 months to discuss progress of the multiplex project. The DNASG will also consider technical standards for the database and forensic science providers. Training and educational requirements should also be in the work plan.

5.2 Karen and June agreed to list all items that should be part of the work plan. DNASG members were also asked to email any suggestions for the work plan to June.

Action: Karen Squibb-Williams/June Guinness/all

Item 6: Allele Frequency Databases

6.1 Adam Shariff introduced this item. He reported that the multiplex upgrade project was launched in October. The NPIA reviewed which population groups could provide the most coverage of the UK population. Then samples were collected primarily from the three of the six identified population groups. A discussion was had as to the relevant UK populations to gain maximum coverage, deeming four populations as relevant, the collection of samples for certain groups were difficult and thus limited in number from the sources used. Scientists currently report statistics in court using up to three population groups. Each forensic science provider holds and maintains their own population data, which if the appropriate consent had been obtained could be provided. The DNASG can advise on a uniform and readily available population data. It was agreed that centrally held data should be maintained, but that reporting should not be extended to the use of that data alone, especially in Scotland and Northern Ireland, who have local population data to use.

6.2 Adam agreed to provide an update on sample collections on the agreed ethnicity categories.

Action: Adam Shariff

6.3 Andrew McDonald suggested he could make enquiries about how Cellmark handle consent issues around their data.

Action: Andrew McDonald

Item 7: PAS Update

7.1 June reported that the Forensic Science Regulator commissioned the development of a PAS for consumables. There has been a consultation on the draft, with 372 comments received. Publication is scheduled for May. The Regulator would advise procurement and laboratories to use the PAS as a requirement for their goods to be procured. June thanked all members of the DNASG that contributed to the consultation on the PAS.

Item 8: LGC Contamination Inquiry

8.1 June reported that the Regulator had looked at the incident and is satisfied that it was a handling error and not systemic. He is also satisfied that appropriate corrective action has been put in place. The Regulator will look at techniques for extracting DNA to see if there are lessons that can be learned.

Post meeting note: The FSR has produced a report which will be published in September

Item 9: Probability limits

9.1 The DNASG discussed the use of the one in a billion probability limit in reporting as published by Evett, et al. This was the common approach that all

agreed they used that approach, Northern Ireland reported the actual kinship probabilities if they were more conservative than the general published figures. Adam informed the DNASG that the FSS gave a presentation on probability limits under the multiplex upgrades. He will see if he can circulate a copy.

Action: Adam Shariff

9.2 The one in a billion approach may be the favoured approach with the new multiplex. Alternatively, a simulation of the most common profile on the multiplex could be used as a ceiling. The DNASG agreed to revisit this issue at the next meeting, hopefully with some data.

Action: NPIA/June Guinness

Item 10: AOB

10.1 Andrew McDonald raised the issue of the speculative search algorithm and how it works. He said that when the search criteria is restricted it eliminates certain categories of SGM+ profiles. Adam Shariff stated an ACPO Gold group is looking at the matter.

Item 11: Dates of next meetings

11.1 The next meetings should be arranged for the next 12 months and circulated.

Action: Kenny Chigbo

LIST OF ACTIONS

3.1	June agreed to check with Simon Iveson if a consultation was necessary on the annex to the Code of Practice	June Guinness
3.2	Simon will be asked to circulate the previous paper on error rate calculation	Simon Iveson
4.1	Karen and June agreed to explore the DNA hotline proposal further with the Regulator	Karen Squibb-Williams/June Guinness
5.1	Karen and June to list all items that should be in the work plan with contributions from all	Karen Squibb-Williams/June Guinness/All
6.2	Adam agreed to provide an update on sample collections on the agreed ethnicity categories	Adam Shariff
6.3	Andrew to make enquiries on how Cellmark handle consent issues around their data	Andrew McDonald
9.1	Adam to check if he can circulate a copy of the FSS presentation on probability limits under the multiplex upgrades	Adam Shariff
9.2	DNASG to revisit probability limits at the next meeting subject to availability of multiplex data	NPIA/June Guinness
11.1	Meetings to be scheduled for the next 12 months	Kenny Chigbo